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# Forest Service NEWS



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## JUDGE DALE WHITE HONORED

PORTLAND, May 2--Forest Service Regional Forester John Butruille and Bureau of Land Management State Director Dean Bibles today presented an award to Judge Dale White of Harney County to recognize his outstanding leadership, coordination and support to fire fighting efforts during the 1990 Burns area fire emergency. The award was presented by Butruille and Bibles at a meeting of the Association of Oregon Counties Public Lands Committee today in Salem.

On August 6, 1990, a lightning storm moved through eastern Oregon, with 430 lightning strikes that resulted in nearly 50 fires in the first two hours. Several of these fires grew rapidly in size, some burning together, to create a major catastrophic fire situation west and north of Burns.

While the state and federal agencies responsible for wildland fire protection actively worked to suppress the fires, it soon became clear that one of the fires, pushed by extremely strong winds, was burning uncontrolled directly toward the communities of Burns and Hines.

In response to this threat, Judge White activated the Emergency Response Team for the County. The team quickly formed and, under Judge White's leadership, worked cooperatively with the agency firefighters to determine a course of action to protect the communities.

Emergency firelines were located and equipment was brought in to build them. Evacuation plans were developed and public notification began. High risk areas were identified and scarce structural protection





resources were strategically positioned. Numerous other details were attended to in order to protect the towns and provide for orderly movement and protection of citizens if the worst should happen. Under Judge White's leadership, all of the people worked together smoothly and problems were ironed out.

Judge White also requested that the Governor invoke the Conflagration Act, which enabled the County to receive desperately needed structural fire protection assistance from other communities throughout Oregon.

Throughout the duration of the fire threat, Judge White facilitated information and coordination meetings twice daily among the Emergency Response Team members, the wildland firefighting agencies, and others involved in the situation. These meetings created an atmosphere of support and cooperation that enabled the fire suppression activities to continue in the most effective and expeditious manner possible.

Judge White also facilitated a public meeting involving the firefighting agencies that provided an opportunity for people to express their concerns and gather information when fears and emotions were running high.

Over 130,000 acres of land and resources were burned, but no lives were lost and the fires did not reach the communities of Burns and Hines. The result could have been far different had it not been for the cooperative attitudes of the people of Harney County and the strong leadership of Judge Dale White.

